



Week from 17 to 23 February 2022

This weekly newsletter prepared on behalf of the EU-GCC Dialogue on Economic Diversification Project includes the top headlines of the most significant and relevant news from across the EU and GCC in a consolidated easy to read format.



Top news headlines from the EU

Green Deal: EU invests over €110 million in LIFE projects for environment and climate in 11 EU countries

The Commission is announcing an investment of over €110 million into [LIFE programme](#) integrated projects for environmental and climate protection, selected after a call for proposals covering the year 2020. The funding will support new major environmental and climate projects in 11 EU countries - Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Poland and Slovenia. The projects contribute to a [green recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic](#) and support the [European Green Deal's](#) objectives of making the EU climate neutral and zero-pollution by 2050. They are examples of actions to deliver key European Green Deal objectives under the [EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030](#) and the [EU Circular Economy Action Plan](#). [Read more.](#)

Data Act: Commission proposes measures for a fair and innovative data economy

Today, the Commission proposes new rules on who can use and access data generated in the EU across all economic sectors. The Data Act will ensure fairness in the digital environment, stimulate a competitive data market, open opportunities for data-driven innovation and make data more accessible for all. It will lead to new, innovative services and more competitive prices for aftermarket services and repairs of connected objects. This last horizontal building block of the Commission's [data strategy](#) will play a key role in the digital transformation, in line with the 2030 digital objectives. [Read more.](#)



Top news headlines from the GCC

KSA: Saudi Zamil Group eyes green energy projects as CEO sees oil and gas here to stay

Oil-to-real estate investment firm Zamil Group is weighing up entering the renewable energy market, the company's CEO Adib Al-Zamil said.

"Investing in new sectors is what has kept us going as a group. We continue to look, we're continuously looking," Al-Zamil told Arab News in an interview.

The prominent family business covers a diverse portfolio of owned, joint venture, and publicly-listed companies, spanning building materials, manufacturing, offshore, petrochemicals, trade and services, and real estate and investments. [Read more.](#)

KSA: Saudi retailers report mixed results as economy recovers from the pandemic

Saudi retailers reported mixed results as the economy steadily recovers from the pandemic, with some seeing their profits rise while others are struggling still. [Read more.](#)

KSA: Saudi Arabia among countries urging big tech to protect data privacy

Saudi Arabia and a coalition of other countries have urged global technology companies to better protect user data, in a bid to protect users from misuse of their private information.

In a joint statement convened by the Riyadh-based Digital Cooperation Organization, Saudi Arabia, Bahrain, Jordan, Kuwait, Pakistan and others urged global technology companies to work with governments to develop privacy and user terms that protect user data. [Read more.](#)

KSA: Heads of foreign missions congratulate Saudi leadership, people on country's first Founding Day

Ambassadors and senior diplomats in Saudi Arabia have congratulated King Salman, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the Saudi people on the country's first Founding Day, wishing them all further peace, progress and prosperity.

On this historic occasion, French ambassador Ludovic Pouille told Arab News: "We celebrate, for the first time in Riyadh and throughout Saudi Arabia, the Founding Day. That is, the founding of the first Saudi state by Imam Mohammed bin Saud in 1727. First of all, I would like to congratulate King Salman, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, and the friendly Saudi people on this historic day. [Read more.](#)

KSA: E-learning global trends forum inaugurated in Riyadh

A forum on the future of learning and technology was inaugurated on Monday in Riyadh by the Ministry of Education and the Saudi Electronic University.

"We are required to build for future generations an e-education system that addresses the challenges of the future, provides knowledge and skills in a form that stimulates development and innovation, and ensures sustainability according to well-established and flexible scientific foundations," said Saudi Education Minister Hamad Al-Asheikh. [Read more.](#)

KSA: Saudi aid center chief meets UN delegation in Riyadh

Adviser at the Royal Court and general supervisor of the King Salman Humanitarian Aid and Relief Center Dr. Abdullah Al-Rabeeah met with a delegation from the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, in Riyadh.

The FAO party was headed by the organization's assistant director general and regional representative for the Near East and North Africa, Dr. Abdulhakim Elwaer. During the meeting, the two sides discussed ways to further strengthen cooperation on humanitarian aid and food security

issues in countries around the world, and Elwaer lauded KSrelief's ongoing professionalism in implementing a range of global projects. [Read more.](#)

UAE: Taqa CEO: UAE's climate transition to accelerate with closer ties between energy players

[The UAE's energy transition](#) is in motion and will accelerate further by adding additional partnerships between utility players and energy companies, said Jasim Husain Thabet, head of [Abu Dhabi National Energy Company](#), also called Taqa.

Mr Thabet told a virtual seminar at [International Energy Week in London](#) that there would always be a need for oil and gas but the energy transition is "happening", with the UAE an early trailblazer investing in sustainable solutions. [Read more.](#)

UAE: Dubai's Seed Group to expand across 15 markets amid global push

Dubai-based investment company Seed Group plans to expand across more than 15 markets around the world, including Brazil, Canada, Russia and Germany, in the coming months, its chief executive said.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the need to have more empowered, high-tech and innovation-led economies in the world," said Hisham Al Gurg, chief executive of the Seed Group and the Private Office of Sheikh Saeed bin Ahmed, said.

"Our global expansion strategy is in line with this ... it has been carefully crafted to extend support to cutting-edge tech business ideas ... a way of sharing with the world the unmatched business insights and expertise that Dubai has to offer. We expect to see high-impact results out of this." [Read more.](#)

UAE: Abu Dhabi and Kuwait bourses sign agreement to improve liquidity

[Abu Dhabi Securities Exchange](#), the Arab world's second-largest stock market, Boursa Kuwait and the Kuwait Clearing Company have signed an agreement to boost bilateral investment through cross-border trading and listings.

Under the co-operation agreement, the three entities will encourage and facilitate legislative, depository and trading collaboration. [Read more.](#)

UAE: UAE to boost number of specialised AI laboratories in the country

The Emirates plans to boost the number of specialised artificial intelligence laboratories in the country and accelerate AI research initiatives, the UAE Council for Artificial Intelligence and Digital Transactions said.

The council held its first meeting of the year remotely on Tuesday and reviewed the outputs of the first phase of its agenda, state-owned news agency Wam reported.

The programme, which featured participants from 90 local and federal government entities, aims to equip graduates with the skills to use AI technologies in their work, in line with the UAE's [National AI Strategy 2031](#). [Read more.](#)

UAE: Dubai airport remains busiest hub for global travel, with 29.1 million passengers in 2021

Dubai International Airport recorded a 12.7 per cent increase in annual passenger traffic in 2021, driven by a strong fourth quarter to beat its own forecast and retain the title of the [world's busiest international hub](#) for the eighth consecutive year.

The airport, the base for [Emirates airline](#) and a key source of revenue for Dubai, handled 29.1 million passengers last year, exceeding its forecast of 28.7 million, operator Dubai Airports said on Tuesday. [Read more.](#)

UAE: Adnoc LNG says natural gas must remain a key player in global energy transition

[Liquefied natural gas](#) must remain a key player in the global energy transition to ensure energy supply continues to meet demand in a secure, sustainable and reliable way, said Fatema Al Nuaimi, chief executive of Adnoc LNG.

Ms Al Nuaimi said gas provides about a quarter of the world's energy supply and this "will and should continue". [Read more.](#)

QATAR: European Union to open embassy in Qatar

The signing of the Establishment Agreement occurred on the same day as the 26th EU-GCC Joint Cooperation Council in Brussels.

An Establishment Agreement for the a new European Union (EU) Embassy has been signed in Brussels by Secretary General of the European Union's External Action Service (EEAS), Stefano Sannino, and Qatari State Minister for Foreign Affairs (MOFA) Sultan bin Saad Al-Muraikhi.

The opening of the EU mission was announced during High Representative Josep Borrell visit in Doha September last year and is planning to be set in motion this year.

This agreement is considered to be the "latest milestone" in EU and Qatar cooperation efforts, according to the [EEAS](#) press release. [Read more.](#)

QATAR: Qatar's Amir stresses importance of energy security at GECF summit

The Gas Exporting Countries Forum (GECF) represents 71% of the world's proven natural gas reserves and 58% of liquified natural gas (LNG) exports.

Qatar's Amir Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani expresses the importance of international cooperation in the energy market during his opening speech at the sixth Gas Exporting Countries Forum in Doha.

The Qatari leader says that the pandemic was an opportunity to ensure a balance between economic growth and climate change by transitioning to low carbon fuels. This includes liquified natural gas (LNG). [Read more.](#)

QATAR: Qatar's LNG exports to Europe increase in January amid rising demand

The European Union has been seeking Qatari shipments of liquified natural gas (LNG) in the event of a possible Russia invasion of Ukraine.

Qatar's exports of LNG to Europe reportedly increased by 65.1% in January, 2022, in comparison to the same month in 2021.

The data was gathered by Qatar-based [Lusail News](#), which also attributes the rise in exports to an increase in destinations receiving Qatari gas.

Globally, Qatar's shipments reached more than 14 destinations. The Gulf state's LNG exports amounted to 21% of the global market and reached up to 7.2 million tonnes. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: Transport ministry unveils 2022 Plan

The ministry's government digital transformation programme (2022) includes launching the first phase of the National Unified E-Government Services Portal, unrolling 88 e-services rendered to citizens and the business community, streamlining procedures and re-engineering of 70 per cent of basic e-government services. The forum also touched on projects to incentivize digital economy in 2022, including an initiative named "Jadara" for introducing advanced technical products into government establishments and firms.

The plan also envisages investment incentives and cybersecurity services, apps and AI services, training nationals and honing the skills of manpower specialised in modern technologies. AI projects include a programme to kickstart a parcel delivery service and capacity building initiative. The ministry also launched some projects and initiatives of the National Space Programme. These include devising policies and national strategies for the space sector, a Space Club project and the Open Satellites Data Platform, in addition to the addition of a 'space corner' in the Children's Museum. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: Pact inked to fund vertical farming project to produce leafy greens

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Oman India Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO) on Wednesday signed an agreement to fund the project of implementing an indoor vertical farming project to produce leafy greens. The agreement was signed within the framework of the ministry's in bolstering the food security system in the Sultanate of Oman.

The project includes the use of Plant Factory technology, which is a closed agricultural system in which light, temperature, humidity and carbon dioxide concentrations necessary for plant growth are artificially controlled. The plants are grown vertically instead of horizontally as in traditional greenhouses; this method increases crop production. This system will allow farms in having a stable production of greens, particularly leafy greens, all year round. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: Rail, road projects on the priority list

Nearly after five years, the development of a railway network is on agenda as one of the top priorities of the government. With a special emphasis on the logistic sector, the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology in its press conference said the focus will be improving the connectivity with Saudi Arabia and within the country.

The government will seek investments to establish a railway line from Suhar to the Khazaen Dry Port area, which will be then linked to neighbouring Saudi Arabia to boost the logistics sector. There are also plans to work on a metro railway project for Muscat as the authorities seek to develop the capital as a major metropolis in the coming years. "The committee to study metro project for Muscat submitted its first report last week. The committee included representatives of all relevant authorities," said the ministry. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: New initiative unveiled to examine key issues shaping Oman's business landscape

Tejarah Talks, a new initiative launched by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) will hold its first event on February 23 at the Civil Aviation Authority Training Centre in Al Hail North. Supported by Sohar Port & Freezone, HSBC and Oman Business Forum, over the coming year Tejarah Talks will bring together panels of experts, business and thought leaders in a series of seven interactive and informal discussion-led evening sessions to examine key issues shaping Oman's business landscape, influencing the sultanate's socio-economic environment, impacting investment and driving non-oil exports.

Tackling topics directly relevant to business, industry and investment in Oman, economic diversification and job creation as well as pressing global issues, Tejarah Talks will explore post-COVID company culture, the evolving world of manufacturing, cracking export markets, the green transition, creative industries and Gen Z, and marketing in the new data-led world. The first Tejarah Talks session will examine the role of sustainability in enhancing competitiveness, attracting investment and unlocking new opportunities. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: Omren activates eduroam service in 32 locations in Oman

Oman Research and Education Network (Omren) of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI) has activated eduroam in 32 locations in the Sultanate distributed among universities, colleges and research centers to enable researchers, academics, and students to stay connected through wireless internet when moving between institutions in Oman or abroad.

eduroam is an innovative Wi-Fi internet access roaming service that allows users to have easy and secure access to wireless internet in research and education institutions within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad by using the same username and password provided by the institution and

without the need for any additional settings. Oman Research and Education Network (Omren) is a central part of a sustainable infrastructure that contributes to the emergence of an effective national innovation ecosystem. It provides the research and education community in the Sultanate of Oman with a common network and collaboration infrastructure adapted to their needs. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: All indicators for brighter outlook of Oman's economy in 2022

With Oman's government finances improving on higher oil prices in 2021 and average oil prices likely to be much higher than the levels estimated in the 2022 budget, coupled with state incentives for businesses, there is a brighter outlook for the year ahead. The price of Oman oil on Monday exceeded US\$92. 'Oman oil price (April 2022 delivery) was US\$92.24, comprising an increase by US\$1.35 from the price of last Friday, which was US\$90.89,' ONA stated. To boost the economy, several government bodies have slashed or cancelled fees across more than 500 services offered to investors and members of the public.

The move was part of an initiative to make Oman more competitive, strike a balance between the services and fees paid, rationalise government spending, streamline fee structure and improve the value of services offered to customers. According to Redha bin Juma al Saleh, chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, implementation of the unified guide of service fees reduction, which has the blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, will catalyse the business environment encouraging entrepreneurs and innovators to start business ventures. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: Oman's first electric car launched

Mays Motors, in cooperation with Oman Technology Fund, launched the sultanate's first electric car at Al Bustan Palace, A Ritz-Carlton Hotel, on Sunday. Priced at RO25,000, hundred units have been pre-booked in the first stage of production. Speaking to Muscat Daily, Haider bin Adnan al Zaabi, co-founder of Mays Motors, said, "We are proud to unveil Oman's first electric car – Mays iE1 – today." According to Zaabi, Mays Motors' electric car is the beginning of a new and promising sector in the sultanate. "We have a team with more than 15 years of experience in the automotive field and are offering an opportunity to establish the first factory for the electronic car industry in the sultanate with an investment of RO5mn." He informed that the car complies with international standards and specifications.

Zaabi informed that the company is currently operating in a small factory in Barka. "We will start production at the end of 2023. We expect to make about 600 cars in the first five years. We have hired international marketing experts to promote our car." Zaabi is hopeful that manufacturing of the electric car will contribute to building an integrated system of industries related to the automotive sector in the sultanate, exploiting locally available raw material and creating more than 800 job opportunities for small and medium companies. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: MTCIT to offer investment opportunities in 7 ports

As part of its efforts to stimulate the economy and increase the country's national income, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) will develop seven ports. H E Saeed al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, said, "The ministry will offer investment opportunities to develop and manage a number of ports – Khasab, Shinas, Shaleem, Shanna, Masirah, Manji and Sadah.

"The ministry will also prepare a study for the establishment of yacht marinas, the establishment of a berth in the port of Shinas, and the inauguration of the Oman Logistics Platform." He further said that MTCIT will launch the 'Logistics Land Bridge' initiative which aims to create a link between North Batinah and Dhahirah governorate, and between North Batinah and Buraimi. This will raise the efficiency of the roads that lead to the borders. [Read more.](#)

OMAN: Oman-UAE non-oil trade rises to AED46bn in 2021

The bilateral non-oil trade exchange between Oman and UAE increased to over AED46bn in 2021, recording a growth of 9 per cent over the previous year, according to Abdullah Tauq al Marri, UAE's Minister of Economy. The 2nd Oman-UAE Economic Forum, held at Dubai Chamber of Commerce and Industry on the sidelines of the Sultanate of Oman's participation in Expo 2020 Dubai, discussed the consolidation of economic partnership between the business communities in the two countries in

manner that serves economic relations, commercial exchange, investments and programmes of cooperation at government and private levels.

The forum focused on developing partnerships in various vital sectors, including innovation, renewable energy, water solutions, financial services, logistics, constructions, real estate and entrepreneurship. Marri said that the Sultanate of Oman is the second largest GCC trade partner of the UAE, harnessing 20 per cent of UAE's total trade. Oman ranks third among Arab states and 10th among major international trade partners of the UAE, he said. [Read more.](#)

KUWAIT: Public-private health partnership 'integral' to Kuwait Vision 2035

The beginning of operations at the Health Assurance Hospitals Company (DHAMAN) before the end of this year reflects the integrality of the partnership between the public and private sectors to the Kuwait Vision 2035 (New Kuwait), said an official Wednesday. In an interview with KUNA, Dhaman hospital CEO Thamer Arab revealed that the Ministry of Health had pushed for the establishment of the company, which was viewed as part of the development of a wholesome and high-quality health service in Kuwait. [Read more.](#)

KUWAIT: Full operation of LNG import project in Al-Zour Complex – 'World's largest in terms of storage capacity'

The Kuwait Integrated Petroleum Industries Company (KIPIC) announced Monday the "complete" operation of the permanent facilities project to import liquefied natural gas in the Al-Zour oil complex. In a press statement, Acting CEO of KIPIC Waleed Al-Badr expressed his happiness with this strategic achievement for the State of Kuwait in general and for the oil sector in particular, which is the first of its kind locally and the largest in the world in terms of storage capacity, which was built in one phase.

He explained that the project consists of eight tanks with a capacity of 225,000 cubic meters each, which is part of the long-term strategic directions of KPC until 2040, which aims to provide the country's necessary current and future energy needs by providing optimal fuel economically and environmentally. [Read more.](#)

KUWAIT: Kuwait ranks 4th in Gulf with projects worth \$202 billion

Between January 13 and February 11 this year the Kuwaiti projects index recorded a decline of 0.49%, reaching 202 billion dollars, compared to 203 billion dollars recorded during the previous month, according to data issued by MEED Projects, which tracks the activities of regional projects, reports Al-Anba daily.

MEED said that at the Gulf level, the value of the Gulf projects index increased by a marginal 0.3% to almost stabilize at its valuation of \$3.31 trillion during the mentioned period, while the GCC market index rose by 0.2% during the same period, with its value remaining at \$2.62 trillion. Four of the eight markets tracked by the index recorded a decline in the month ending on February 11, as Bahrain was the worst performer and the value of its projects decreased by 5.2%, while the Omani projects index decreased by 1%, and the UAE index by 0.9%, while Qatar was the best performer with the value of its projects increasing by 3.7%. [Read more.](#)

KUWAIT: Digital banks helping Kuwait keep pace with global trends

The Central Bank of Kuwait's recent decision to open the door for the establishment of digital banks signaled a new milestone in the state financial regulator's drive for digitization and keeping abreast with the latest trends in global financial services, Kuwaiti banking officials and experts have concurred. In separate interviews with the Kuwait News Agency (KUNA), they argued that the move was also driven by growing needs from a tech-savvy young generation who are searching for easy-to-access financial services. Executive Director of the Supervision Sector at the Central Bank of Kuwait (CBK) Waleed Al-Awadhi told KUNA that the digital banks will have no branches and will offer all banking services through digital channels. [Read more.](#)

KUWAIT: GCC-STAT report highlights Kuwait's development achievements

The Statistical Centre for the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC-STAT) has issued a statistical report on the most important statistical indicators that reflect the achievements made by Kuwait in its developmental process in all economic and social fields.

Economic Diversification and Sustainable Development

Sustainable development is one of the most important economic trends followed by Kuwait, which constantly seeks to diversify its production base and national income sources. The data indicate that the contribution of the non-oil sector amounted to 65.8% of the GDP in 2020, while the contribution of non-oil revenues to the total government revenues reached 16.5% in 2020 compared to 11.4% in 2015. [Read more.](#)

BAHRAIN: Derasat forum to focus on impact of energy transition in MENA region

The MENA region as a technological leader in green energy and the circular carbon economy (CCE) will figure high on the agenda of a symposium to be held next week in Bahrain.

The second Middle East and North Africa IAEE Symposium will be hosted by Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Derasat) in association with the fifth Derasat annual forum under the theme "The Impact of Energy Transition in the MENA Region."

Other topics to be addressed by elite experts, speakers and researchers from more than 10 countries include advancing green energy in MENA, artificial intelligence and energy transition in the MENA region and green uses for fossil fuels in the sustainability era. [Read more.](#)

BAHRAIN: NIHR launches 2022-2025 work plan

National Institution for Human Rights (NIHR)'s President Ali Ahmed Al Derazi held a virtual meeting with representatives of various human rights organizations to launch the institution's strategy and work plan for the years 2022-2025.

NIHR Commissioners Council Member Dr. Houria Al Dairi presented an overview of the strategic objectives of the work plan; the first objective is working on the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on the national economy.

The second objective is focusing on education and raising awareness on human rights, the third objective is to achieve equal gender rights and treatment in all economic, social and cultural sectors.

The last objective is to ensure all members of society shall enjoy the highest attainable standard of health. [Read more.](#)



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